

Institution: University of Northampton
Unit of Assessment: 29, English Language and Literature
Title of case study: <i>Angry Planet</i> : Culture, Pedagogy, Performance
<p>1. Summary of the impact This case study focuses on <i>Angry Planet</i>, an interdisciplinary choral collaboration between Charles Bennett, Associate-Professor in Creative Writing at the University of Northampton (2007 – present) and composer, Bob Chilcott. A blend of lyrics and composition, their investigation into the sounds and rhythms of nature in relation to musical creativity resulted in a performance at the BBC Proms (<i>Angry Planet</i>, The Royal Albert Hall, 5 August 2012), featuring The Bach Choir and its Musical Director, David Hill. The project’s innovative methodology included training school children alongside professional singers, contributing to their educational advancement, social and cultural integration and developing their innate creative potential.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Bennett’s poetic regard and praise for nature, inviting an ecological engagement, is central to the research underlying <i>Angry Planet</i>. The ecological awareness stems from <i>Orchard Days</i> (2009), commissioned by the Arts Council to accompany a poetry trail and featuring in a short BBC film (3.1). These 12 poems, framed by Norman Stanier’s prose and Richard Compton’s photographs, chronicled seasonal changes in the Dragon Orchard, Herefordshire. Praised by the Ledbury Poetry Festival Chairman as well as eminent UK actor, Sir Ian McKellen (3.1), they were re-published and updated as <i>365 Apples</i> (2009, 3.2). Bennett’s work (see RAE 2008 (3.3)) is characterised as “<i>Brimming over with startling voices, arresting images and an indefatigable joie de vivre</i>” (The Poetry Book Society quoted in 3.1), but it was <i>Evenlode</i> (2013, 3.4) that reinforced his identity as a nature poet. Bennett’s lyrics for <i>Angry Planet</i>, illustrated by Diane Griffiths, are published by Hawthorne Press; the vocal and conductor’s score is available from Oxford University Press (OUP) (3.5). OUP’s Choral Promotion Specialist has said that her company were “<i>very proud to have been part of this whole project.</i>” (3.6)</p> <p><i>Angry Planet</i> is a high point of Chilcott and Bennett’s partnership, evolving since 2009. Chilcott’s international prestige is evidenced in musical performances by King’s College Choir Cambridge, The Westminster Abbey Choir, Helsinki’s Grex Musicus and The Chamber Choir of Europe. The choral scores underpinning <i>Angry Planet</i>’s libretto and building the creative partnership are published by OUP. They are: <i>Swimming over London</i> (2010, 3.7); <i>The Rose in the Middle of Winter</i> (2010, 3.8) and <i>Furusato: 5 Arrangements of Japanese Songs</i> (2011, 3.9). These combine Chilcott’s ambitious choral arrangements with Bennett’s love of historical language and genres: Anglo-Saxon riddles, medieval dream narratives, and the tradition of nursery rhyme. The published scores have led to musical recordings by The King’s Singers and Wroclaw Philharmonic Choir for Signum Classics: excellent reviews have appeared in <i>BBC Music Magazine</i>, <i>Classic FM Magazine</i>, <i>Musicweb International</i> and <i>The Guardian</i> (3.10).</p> <p>In <i>Angry Planet</i>’s practice-based research methodology the compositions developed through performance, in response to the choral performers’ interpretation. Alongside Hill and The Bach Choir, children from primary schools in Westminster, Harrow, Kensington and Chelsea were encouraged to develop their own creativity and become active collaborators. This experimental orientation developed from Bennett and Chilcott’s insights that music and poetry encourage early social integration and that participating in choral music enhances awareness of art and inspires social and cultural confidence. The interactive approach between performers and artists inspired more innovative practices; The Bach Choir’s report on <i>Angry Planet</i> shows that the singers’ engagement in the project inspired composition: “<i>Charles and Bob asked children in the schools involved in the Outreach project for ideas. Charles took their thoughts home and composed the poems that would form the words of the cantata</i>” (5.1). Both believe that youth choirs inspire experimentation because of their openness to new ideas and experiences (see 5.3, on working with youth choirs in UN’s Worcester Cathedral Report).</p>

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Bennett explored interdisciplinary writing partnerships in a £700 HEA-funded Creative Writing seminar, 'Students as Writing Partners' (UN, 18 March 2013), with Northampton students, author Mark Cocker, and local industry representatives including the Creative Projects Manager, Royal & Derngate Theatre, Northampton and the Artistic Director, NN Contemporary Art Northampton.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

(3.1) Bennett's website, which includes reviews of his work (<http://www.charlesbennett.net/ac>)

(3.2) Bennett, Charles, Norman Stanier and Richard Compton, *Orchard Days* (Putley: Dragon Orchard, 2009); Bennett, Charles, *365 Apples* (Syderstone: Hawthorn Press, 2009).

(3.3) Bennett, Charles, *Wintergreen* (West Kirby, Wirral: Headland Publications, 2002); Bennett, Charles, *How to Make a Woman Out of Water* (London: Enitharmon Press, 2007).

(3.4) Bennett, Charles, *Evenlode* (Devon: Oversteps Press, 2013).

(3.5) Bennett, Charles (with illustrations by Diane Griffiths), *Angry Planet* (Syderstone: Hawthorn Press, 2012). To hire *Angry Planet's* vocal and conductors score from OUP, see: <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780193376403.do#.UqEr0NLFU40> Accessed: 16.07.2013.

(3.6) Testimonial on file: OUP Choral Promotion Specialist (12.02.2013).

(3.7) Chilcott, Bob (Libretto by Charles Bennett), *Swimming Over London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Track 1 on The King's Singers, *Swimming Over London* (Signum Classics, 2010).

(3.8) Chilcott, Bob (Libretto by Charles Bennett), *The Rose in the Middle of Winter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Track 6 on Bob Chilcott/Wroclaw Philharmonic Choir, *The Seeds of the Stars* (Signum Classics, 2012).

(3.9) Chilcott, Bob (Libretto by Charles Bennett), *Furusato: 5 Arrangements of Japanese Songs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Tracks 12,13,14,15 and 16 on Bob Chilcott/Wroclaw Philharmonic Choir, *The Seeds of the Stars* (Signum Classics, 2012).

(3.10) Album reviews of The King's Singers, *Swimming Over London* (<http://www.signumrecords.com/catalogue/vocal/swimming-over-london/sigcd192.html>) and Bob Chilcott/Wroclaw Philharmonic Choir, *The Seeds of the Stars* (<http://www.signumrecords.com/catalogue/wroclaw-philharmonic-choir/the-seeds-of-stars/sigcd311.html>). Accessed: 16.07.2013.

In relation to 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9, the composer's name (Chilcott) is cited as the author of the score on the publication jacket, while the librettist (Bennett) is acknowledged on the sheet music inside.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words).

Education

Angry Planet's impact on shaping the educational and cultural experiences of the children involved has been significant, because all came from state primary schools that have about 80% of pupils speaking English as a second language and entitled to free school meals. Consequently, it was the 200 young performers from primary schools in Westminster, Harrow, Kensington and Chelsea (5.1), who were most profoundly affected by the opportunity to participate in the project's innovative pedagogic practice, and to work alongside vocalists from The BBC Singers, The Bach Choir and The National Youth Choir. Singing in *Angry Planet* was an important opportunity for breaking down cultural barriers, raising the young singers' confidence and introducing classical music to new audiences. A Bach Choir collation of responses attests to its educational impact. One child commented, "A once in a lifetime experience. Not everyone can say they have sung in the Albert Hall" (5.1); a parent enthused, "It was really exciting. She's been dreaming about this for

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weeks.” (5.1); and a teacher involved in *Angry Planet* noted that many students, “felt very proud of their part in it” (5.1). From a survey conducted in July 2013 of 18 children at Our Lady Dolours Primary School, Harrow, all 18 agreed with the questionnaire statement that participating in the BBC Prom “was really special and I will always remember it” and 14 agreed that they do more singing and musical activities now because of their participation (5.2).

Angry Planet was also educationally and creatively path-breaking in including a signing choir from Great Baddow High School, which the Bach Choir Report states, “was the first appearance of a signing choir at the Proms.” (5.1). Its educational impact has been enhanced by public events about the project for adult learners, and audio recordings, blog posts and commemorative booklets, all facilitated by UN (5.3). Demonstrating sustainable impact beyond the REF census date, the UN’s audio-blog post about Worcester (31 July 2013) has been referenced by OUP’s Choral Music website and a newsletter (September 2013), which was distributed to over 3000 people globally (5.3).

Culture

The BBC Prom, *Angry Planet*, impacted on the public discourse of cultural commentators and the choral music canon. It was broadcast live on Radio 3 from the Royal Albert Hall and was available to listen back to on BBC Radio 3 I-Player for one week. Articles preceding its World Premier were published in *Choir & Organ* and the *Independent*, while, as evidence of Bennett, Chilcott and Hill’s stellar reputations, *Angry Planet* was a *Time Out* ‘Critics Choice’ and featured in *Metro*’s ‘What’s on Today’ (5.4). The Proms performance received positive reviews in the *Guardian*, *The Times*, the *Oxford Times* (5.4), and on websites such as *Classicalsource.com* (5 August 2012) and *larkreviews.com* (6 August 2012). A *YouTube* video posted by Bennett and Chilcott two days after the BBC Prom and in association with OUP (5.5), in which they discuss *Angry Planet*, was viewed by 728 people globally by 31 July 2013. *Angry Planet*’s large acapella composition and green agenda impressed reviewers and spectators and made a significant contribution to the choral canon (See *The Times* and the *Guardian* in 5.4). One audience member described its scale as, “breath-taking.” (5.1) Since the Prom and indicative of the growing international cultural reputations of *Angry Planet*’s creators, Hill has been appointed Professor at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music (1 July 2013), and Bennett’s poem, ‘The Drowned Radio’, will be read on Australian Broadcasting Radio in 2014.

Angry Planet’s cultural and economic impact has also been manifested in the facilitation of further Bennett and Chilcott composer/librettist collaborations that have developed its new forms of artistic expression; these include Signum recordings and performances (5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9). The performance of another collaboration, *My Lady Poverty* (Leeds Town Hall, 25 August 2012), like *Angry Planet* embraced a diverse demographic of choral singers including York’s Chapter House Choir, The Lindley Junior School Choir, and Vocado (Swedish Choir of the Year 2011). However, it was *Five Days That Changed the World* at the Worcester International Festival for Young Singers (Worcester Cathedral, 26 July 2013) that most significantly increased the global reach and creative significance of Chilcott and Bennett’s collaborations with young people (see reports in 5.3 and 5.8). Internationalising *Angry Planet*’s use of youth choirs (5.3), *Five Days* was primarily performed by four choirs from Russia, Austria, Spain and the UK to an audience that the Worcester International Festival for Young Singers has estimated consisted of 350 participants and 350 spectators.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

(5.1) The Bach Choir, ‘Report on the Angry Planet’ (2012). Internal report made available by The Bach Choir, London. See also: ‘The Angry Planet: A Commission’ (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mee2ygK3Ti4>). Accessed: 16.07.2013.

(5.2) Questionnaire responses from Our Lady Delours Primary School, Harrow (Returned to the University of Northampton School of the Arts, July 2013).

(5.3) Bennett, Charles, ‘Audio Recording: Poetry Commissions’ (UN School of the Arts Research Seminar, 21 May 2013). To access, see: <http://researchsupporthub.northampton.ac.uk/2013/05/28/school-of-the-arts-reader-in-poetry->

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[charles-bennett-reflects-on-bbc-prom-angry-planet-2/](#)

Bennett, Charles and Diane Griffiths, *Angry Planet Commemorative Booklet* (Commissioned by UN School of the Arts, 2013). To access a copy and read a UN report on the public event, 'Angry Planet: Dr Charles Bennett in conversation with Learning Manager at the BBC Singers, Garth McArthur, 11 June 2013', see: <http://wp.me/p2eVC1-10g>

Bennett, Charles, 'Pre-Gala Concert Talk: *Five Days That Changed the World*' (The Guestry, Worcester Cathedral, 26 July 2013). To access recording, see: <http://wp.me/p2eVC1-150>

(5.4) A selection of press coverage and reviews of the performance of *Angry Planet* including: *Choir & Organ* (July-August 2012); the *Guardian* (4 stars, 6 August 2012); the *Independent* ('The Proms think big: Can the world's leading classical festival hold its own in an Olympic year?', 7 July 2012); *Metro* ('What's on Today', 5 August 2012); *Oxford Times* (9 August 2012) *The Times* (3 Stars, 7 August 2012) and *Time Out* ('Critics Choice', 2-8 August 2012).

(5.5) Bennett, Charles and Bob Chilcott, 'On the *Angry Planet*', 07 August 2012, Oxford Academic (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YDHiDMKpE0>). Accessed: 31.07.2013.

(5.6) Chilcott, Bob (Libretto by Charles Bennett), *The Seeds of the Stars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Track 18 on Bob Chilcott/Wroclaw Philharmonic Choir, *The Seeds of the Stars* (Signum Classics, 2012).

(5.7) Chilcott, Bob (Libretto by Charles Bennett), *Marriage to My Lady Poverty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

(5.8) Chilcott, Bob (Libretto by Charles Bennett), *Five Days That Changed the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For a review of *Five Days* at Worcester Cathedral in *Seen and Heard International*, see: <http://www.seenandheard-international.com/2013/07/28/youth-choirs-celebrate-in-ancient-cathedral/> Accessed: 28.07.2013.

(5.9) Oxford University Press sales figures for the quantity of copies of Chilcott and Bennett Scores sold for the years 2012 and 2013. The 2013 sales figures cover the period 1 April 2013 - 1 September 2013.

	2013	2012
<i>SWIMMING OVER LONDON</i>	20 CPY	38 CPY
<i>THE ROSE IN MIDDLE OF WINTER</i>	112 CPY	515 CPY
<i>FURUSATO SSAA</i>	187 CPY	1,556 CPY
<i>FURUSATO SATB</i>	429 CPY	1,119 CPY
<i>THE SEEDS OF STARS</i>	(8) CPY	362 CPY
<i>FIVE DAYS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD</i>	54 CPY	445 CPY